

Dear Gulf Council Members and All Interested Parties,

I am a supporter of the Commercial Fishermen, I am a long time recreational fisher person and I am a seafood consumer. I have also followed the issues before the Gulf Council (in person at meetings, via the Web-site and by sharing information with other informed citizens) and the actions that the Council has proposed and implemented. For those reasons, I believe that I have a better than average understanding of the meaning behind, and possible repercussions of your actions on, Reef Fish Amendment 30B. Please consider my thoughts when you are reaching your decision because those actions will cease being words on a paper and will have a major impact on people's lives and our local economy. The wrong choice now could lead to changes that very well might be irreversible.

I support IFQs and feel that they need to be put in place as quickly as possible in regard to Amendment 30B. If the quota is not divided among the fishermen, I fear the following outcome:

- 1) Derby fishing where our men will be faced with fishing in unsafe conditions in order to try to get whatever income they may acquire before the fishing grounds are closed.
- 2) Fishermen being unemployed for a good part of the year leading to unnecessary financial hardships. Other industries that count on the business of the commercial sector (supply houses, fish houses, fish markets, grocers, restaurants, etc..) will also be affected. Considering the state of our economy, I feel that any action that causes ANY other loss of business/income can not be considered at this time.
- 3) If the supply of fresh, American supplied seafood is interrupted for any length of time, I fear that those who retail that product will have to look elsewhere (imports and farm-raised) to satisfy their customers. And even though the fishermen will return to fishing at the beginning of the year, how many businessmen will deal with any supplier that can not guarantee consistent and reliable delivery of a product. I understand that with a lower quota that there will be less fresh seafood but with the IFQs, there should still be a fairly constant supply. In simple words, as a consumer, I would wait for the next boat to come in for a grouper dinner. But I wouldn't wait if there wasn't another boat coming in for 5 months.
- 4) Commercial fishing has a history in this and almost every country that borders water that can only be rivaled by farming. These men provide an invaluable food source and maintain a way of life that can NOT be allowed to perish. Protecting our natural resources are a must!!!!!! But the council has implemented MANY good, conservational rules and the fish populations are reflecting the good that has been done by those rules. IF the quota must be lowered by Amendment 30B, then it must. But PLEASE divide that quota into IFQs so that the Commercial Industry and all the other businesses that it supports have a chance to survive.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Judy Stone